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2 February 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL ESTIMATES BOARD

FROM: Assistant Director for National Estimates

SUBJECT: Proposal for NIE and text of memorandum re National Estimates of the Situation

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The following is the text of a memorandum received from Colonel [REDACTED] USAF, of the Estimates Staff, which is circulated for your information. It is suggested that the Board may consider this proposal at an early meeting.

"1. The processes of reaching a decision have been thoroughly analyzed many times, and by many people, and found generally to follow a reasonably well defined pattern. For the most part the processes are rational, logical, and orderly. For many years decisions have been reached through an "Estimate of the Situation" which essentially is nothing more than an analytical and logical method of solving a problem. As translated and extrapolated to problems on a national scale, the processes for a given set of circumstances could be outlined as follows:

<u>United States</u>	<u>Adversary</u>
Objectives	Objectives
:	:
:	Comparison
:	(Indication)
:	(of)
Capabilities	(Conflict)
and	Comparison
Vulnerabilities	of
Opposing Forces	
Capabilities	Capabilities
and	and
Vulnerabilities	Vulnerabilities
Courses of Action	Courses of Action
Open	Open
:	:
Opposing Lines	Analysis
of Action	
Most Feasible	Deduction
Line of Action	
Most Probable	Line of Action
Line of Action	
Recommendation	

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"2. Where a nation's objectives are in conflict with those of another nation, it is obvious that a situation exists where a contest by force must be initiated if the objectives of one are to be attained. The forces available to a nation are numerous, i.e., political, economic, psychological, military, scientific, technological, sociological, and many others. In addition, nations derive strength from their natural position, physical and moral. Therefore, viewed in the broad sense when two nations' objectives are conflicting, a state of war exists between them whether or not a formal declaration is made. Wars today are being waged and won, without formal declarations and with or without the engagement of armed forces, merely through the proper application of other forces available to the nation. It follows then that an estimate of a situation at the national level can no longer be valid if it deals with but one of the forces available to achieve an objective. Further, when national objectives are in conflict, a national estimate is realistic and completely valid only if it recognizes that a state of war or conflict exists.

"3. An estimate of a situation must include a comparison of all forces available at the national level that bear directly upon a nation's capability to attain its objectives. The courses of action open must be those which would result in the attainment of an objective. The analysis of opposing lines of action must be based upon a cause-effect relationship, or an action-reaction study. The value of an estimate is in direct ratio to the accuracy of factual information on the nation's capabilities and vulnerabilities. When properly assembled, an estimate can provide an orderly array of information reduced to manageable and intelligible proportions, and further, it can provide a sound basis for decision.

"4. The assembling of such an estimate at the national level, in such form as to be of optimum value to the Chief Executive, is a quite tedious, time-consuming and detailed task. Essentially, it is a task involving the collection of a mass of information, its transformation into evaluated intelligence, and its reduction to intelligible and manageable form. Fortunately, there exist, in the various departments and agencies of the Executive branch of the Federal Government, the facilities for collecting information and transforming it into evaluated intelligence, and to a lesser extent the facilities for reducing it to intelligible and manageable form. Unfortunately, no specific department or agency has been assigned the specific responsibility and requisite authority to assemble, and present to the Chief Executive, a comprehensive estimate of any given situation of sufficient scope to facilitate a logically developed and well-founded decision. By no means does this imply that proper decisions cannot be made without a comprehensive and formally-prepared estimate, but the task of making a decision is made much more difficult in the absence of the assistance to be gained from such an estimate.

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"5. For the most part, the current responsibilities of the various departments and agencies in the fields of information and intelligence are reasonably well defined. However, in the field of assembling such information and intelligence at the national level, only two agencies exist which have responsibility and requisite authority by law and regulation.

- a. It is the statutory duty of the National Security Council, subject to the direction of the President, 'to assess and appraise the objectives, commitments, and risks of the United States in relation to our actual and potential military power, in the interest of national security, for the purpose of making recommendations to the President in connection therewith'.... The mere appraisal and assessment of objectives, commitments, and risks in relation to military power falls far short of a comprehensive and complete estimate in any given situation. Even though 'The Council shall have a staff', it is not clear that the NSC staff either has assumed, or is capable of assuming as its sole obligation, the preparation of complete estimates.
- b. The National Security Resources Board has the statutory function 'to advise the President concerning the coordination of military, industrial, and civilian mobilization', in the event of war. Thus, facilities are available for making a significant contribution to a comprehensive estimate in any given situation, but it is clear that the NSRB has neither a mandate nor a capability to prepare such an estimate.
- c. The Central Intelligence Agency has the statutory duties, under the direction of the National Security Council, to advise; to recommend for coordination purposes; to correlate and evaluate intelligence relating to the national security; to perform such other functions and duties as may be directed; in relation to intelligence activities of the Government departments and agencies affecting national security. The charter of CIA thus contains the broad general authorization for the assembling of all the material necessary for an estimate of the situation at the national level. It appears however that, in the absence of specific direction, the CIA is not undertaking the preparation of national estimates of the situation on a truly comprehensive scale. The

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newly-formed CIA Office of National Estimates is engaged in formulating 'nation intelligence estimates' in response primarily, it would appear, to the expressed desires of the IAC. The scope of the NIE's is not clearly defined, but in any event they are much too restricted and inadequate to be acceptable as a comprehensive estimate of a given situation upon which a decision could be based.

"6. From this, it is reasonably clear that the Executive branch of the Federal Government contains all the facilities and resources, within its various separate departments and agencies, to provide all the available material that is essential to an estimate of any given situation at the national level. It is also clear that no single agency has been made responsible for the assembling of such material into a comprehensive estimate of a given situation involving the national security upon which a decision by the Chief Executive can be based. Of all the Government departments and agencies, it would appear that the National Security Council alone has the statutory obligation to make recommendations to the President in connection with 'the objectives, commitments, and risks of the United States . . . , in the interest of national security,' and that the Central Intelligence Agency alone is responsive to the National Security Council 'to perform such other functions and duties as may be directed,' as well as having statutory authority to coordinate, correlate, evaluate, and disseminate national intelligence.

#7. The President of the United States, as the Chief Executive of the nation and as Commander-in-Chief of the nation's armed forces, must bear the heaviest responsibilities of any of the nation's citizens. The powers granted to him under the Constitution and through various acts of the Congress include the important power of final decision in many situations which determine the course of action to be taken by the nation as a whole. Such decisions inevitably are far-reaching and fraught with consequences that affect the lives and well-being of all citizens and in the ultimate may affect their survival as a nation. It would appear that the fundamental and most serious obligation of all the departments and agencies of the Executive branch of our Government should be to provide the President with all the factual information available which bears upon a given situation, to the end that his decisions can be well-founded. It would appear further that, due to the complexity of factors which enter into the solution of problems related to the national security, a single agency should be given the clearly defined responsibility and requisite authority to assemble all the information bearing upon a given situation which reposes in the several Government departments and agencies, and to reduce such information to intelligible and manageable form, through the

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medium of a national estimate of the situation, for the convenience of the President and the National Security Council.

"8. A directive from the National Security Council to the Central Intelligence Agency would serve adequately to establish appropriate responsibility and requisite authority. It is readily within the capabilities of the CIA staff to undertake the preparation of comprehensive estimates. However, it is within the present scope of the Director's authority in CIA to direct the preparation of one comprehensive national estimate of a given situation as a means of exploring and establishing improved methods in operation. For the time being, and as an initial approach to developing sound procedures for an improved service to the Chief Executive, the latter step is preferable.

"9. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Director, Central Intelligence Agency, approve the preparation of a comprehensive national estimate of the situation of the United States vis-a-vis U.S.S.R., and designate the Office of National Estimates as responsible monitoring authority for the CIA.

/s/
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[REDACTED]
Colonel USAF
Estimates Staff"

Attachment: 1

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(Attachment to memorandum from Colonel [REDACTED])

"3. Division of Labor

	<u>Title</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Agencies</u>
<u>a</u>	Objectives	U.S. U.S.S.R.	NSC State
<u>b</u>	Strengths		
	(1) Political	U.S. U.S.S.R.	State State
	(2) Sociological	U.S. U.S.S.R.	Census State, Labor
	(3) Psychological	U.S.	CIA, State State, Defense
	(4) Geographic	U.S. U.S.S.R.	CIA Defense
	(5) Scientific	U.S. U.S.S.R.	CIA (OSI) CIA (OSI)
	(6) Economic	U.S. U.S.S.R.	NSRB, CIA, Commerce State, CIA
	(7) Transportation	U.S. U.S.S.R.	Commerce Defense
	(8) Military	U.S. U.S.S.R.	Defense Defense
<u>c</u>	Courses of Action Open	U.S. U.S.S.R.	NSC, State, Defense State, Defense
<u>d</u>	Opposing Lines of Action	U.S. U.S.S.R.	CIA (State and) CIA (Defense)
<u>e</u>	Most Probable Lines of Action	U.S. U.S.S.R.	NSC State, Defense
<u>f</u>	Conclusions and Recommendations		CIA (IAC) "

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